



Why Is Milk White?: & 200 Other Curious Chemistry Questions

By Alexa Coelho, Simon Quellen Field

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When it comes to chemistry, most kids have more questions than answers. Why do you get cavities when you eat too much sugar? How does sun block protect your skin from getting a sunburn? What makes soda so fizzy? And why do you need antifreeze in your car? Teenager Alexa Coelho quizzed her neighbor, chemist Simon Field, with hundreds of perplexing questions, and now she has the answers. Field covers a wide variety of concepts from simple to complex, but always with straightforward, easy-to-understand explanations. And for those readers who want to see chemistry in action, *Why Is Milk White?* also includes a dozen unique experiments to try at home. Lift latent fingerprints from a "crime scene" using super glue (for a glass or smooth surface) or iodine (for paper). Hollow out the zinc interior of a penny using muriatic acid, leaving only a thin copper shell. Conduct a paper chromatography experiment to separate food coloring into its component dyes. Or use easy-to-find chemicals to create plastic "slime" Silly Putty, or a bouncing ball. This book is the perfect resource for budding scientists everywhere. Simon Field is the author of *Culinary Reactions*, *Why There's Antifreeze in Your Toothpaste*, and *Gonzo Gizmos*, and is the creator of the popular Web site www.scitoys.com. Alexa Coelho is a curious teenager who asks a lot of chemistry questions.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 5-8-This book was created by an adult science writer and an 11-year-old with an interest in science. Coelho compiled a list of questions and Field provided the answers. The questions are loosely grouped into subject headings: "People and Animals," "Plants," "Household Chemistry," "Health and Safety," "Things That Catch Fire or Go Bang," "Things That Stink," etc. The book begins with a short introduction on how to read structural formulas. The questions range from quite basic to complicated and cover a broad range of topics, from "How does a Van de Graaff generator work?" to "Why does snow melt?" The answers range in length from a paragraph to two pages, and the writing is dry and uneven. A few black-and-white photographs, simple illustrations of chemical structures, and 12 experiments are included. These activities range from making the familiar dancing raisins (making raisins "dance" in a carbonated beverage) to making a butane balloon that involves freezing butane and then filling a balloon with it and observing it change from a liquid to a gas. "Smoking Hands" involves mixing small amounts of household ammonia and muriatic acid. Many of the experiments require adult supervision. While this book includes a lot of interesting facts, it may be a challenge for students to access them due to its somewhat arbitrary arrangement.-Maren Ostergard, King County Library System, Issaquah, WA(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From [Booklist](#)

Partial authorship credit for this question-and-answer-based science book goes to teenager Coelho, the curious neighbor of chemist coauthor Field. The geneses of the book are the questions Coelho would often pose to him in passing, such as "How does superglue work?" or "Why do skunks smell bad?" Scores of Coelho's questions are organized into topical chapters concerning household chemicals, things that make noise, colors, and food, among many others. While illustrations of complex structural formulas are included in many explanations, the basics of reading structural formulas of chemicals are provided at the start of the book. Demonstrative experiments are included to clarify difficult concepts, and links to YouTube videos of others completing these experiments will appeal to digital natives. Many of Coelho's questions are things that other adolescents (and adults) may have wondered, and here they are answered by a knowledgeable scientist who gives readers all the tools they may need to understand the complex chemistry of the everyday world. Grades 5-8. --Erin Anderson

Review

"Many of Coelho's questions are things that other adolescents (and adults) may have wondered, and here they are answered by a knowledgeable scientist who gives readers all the tools they may need to understand the complex chemistry of the everyday world." —*Booklist*

"Just the book to inspire the budding chemist, or simply entertain, while teaching, the rest of us."—*The Pioneer Woman*

Users Review

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Luis Poole:

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